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AARDVARK-VANAHEIM PRESENTS

CEREBUS

52
JUL

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A Note from the Publisher

You will probably notice something quite different about this issue, namely that there are three short stories in it. Dave had been thinking of doing this for a while, but the opportunity was never really there before. One of these stories, Elfguest, is a special one to Dave and I. Richard and Wendy have accomplished with Elfquest a very unique kind of success. Even though we keep in touch as much as possible, it's not always easy to find a way to show our applause for both the book and the creators behind it. The only natural thing to do, for a writer/artist (with an acute sense of humour) was to do this story. It was to appear in an anthology title we were planning to do with Gene Day, and, after his death we quietly put it aside until the right moment. The decision to do an issue of short stories made it possible to finally print Elfguest. One of the advantages of publishing your own book, is that from time to time the opportunity presents itself when you can do a special story. Although I feel that every story in Cerebus is special, this one is for Richard and Wendy, and all of us who have come to care for Cutter, Skywise, Leetah and all the tribe.

The Insecure Sinecure is one of those stories that should be read aloud for the greatest effect. Lord Julius' effeminate son is back, and he's brought his friends. The results are predictably hilarious, as Cerebus continues to find new ways to part a fool from his money.

Because of the pressing deadline created by the Canadian Tour, I had decided to answer the letters this issue. However, when I sat down to do this, I found it wasn't as easy as it looked. Therefore, I only wrote an introduction and left it at that. I promise, though, that Dave will be back with #53. See you in August!!

Deni

CEREBUS

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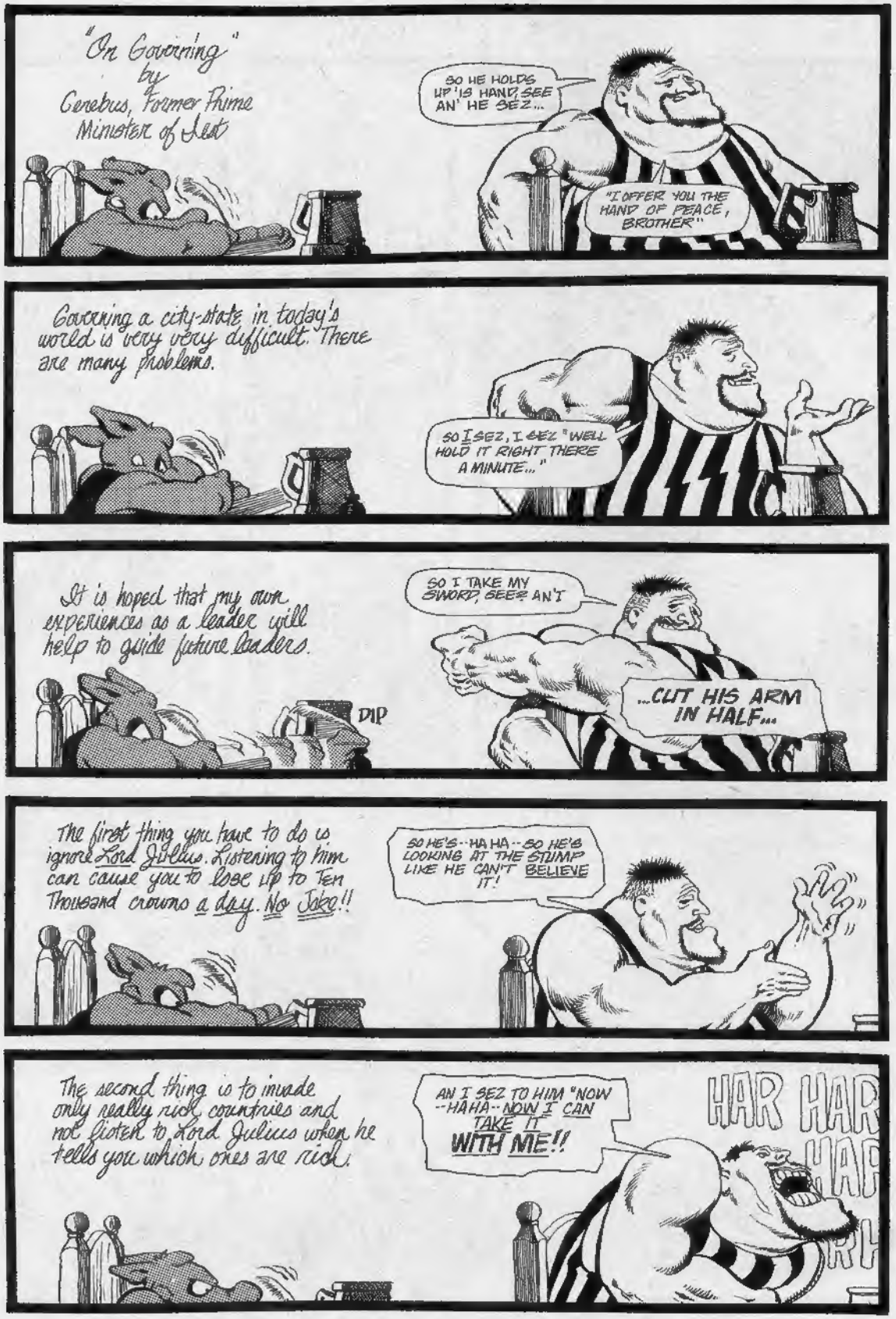
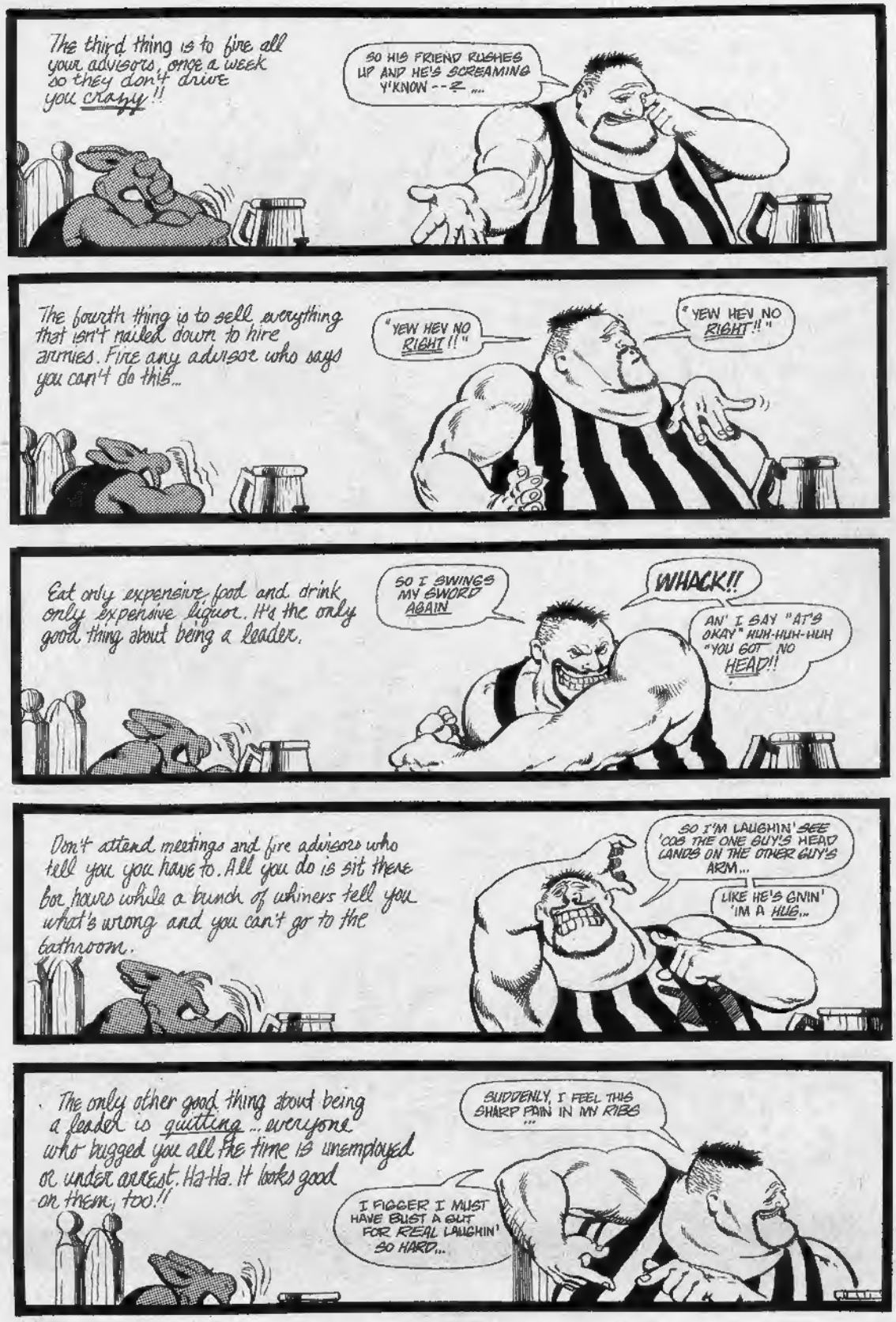
Writing
The BLUE DUCK
BARKEEP!
ALE!
CORNER TABLE!
HAR
HAR
HAR
HAR
SO HE BORT UH WALKS UP-- WIT' 'IS HANDS IN 'IS POCKETS
CRAK
HE BARELY COMES UP T'MY WAIST -- RIGHT?


"On Governing"
by
Cerebus, Former Prime
Minister of Lest
SO HE HOLDS UP 'IS HAND, SEE AN' HE SEZ...
"I OFFER YOU THE HAND OF PEACE, BROTHER"
Governing a city-state in today's world is very very difficult. There are many problems.
SO I SEZ, I SEZ "WELL HOLD IT RIGHT THERE A MINUTE..."
It is hoped that my own experiences as a leader will help to guide future leaders.
DIP
SO I TAKE MY SWORD, SEE? AN' I
...CUT HIS ARM IN HALF...
The first thing you have to do is ignore Lord Julius. Listening to him can cause you to lose up to Ten Thousand crowns a day. No Joke!!
SO HE'S--HA HA--SO HE'S LOOKING AT THE STUMP LIKE HE CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
The second thing is to invade only really rich countries and not listen to Lord Julius when he tells you which ones are rich.
AN I SEZ TO HIM "NOW --HA HA--NOW I CAN TAKE IT WITH ME!!
HAR HAR
HAR


The third thing is to fire all your advisors, once a week so they don't drive you crazy!!
SO HIS FRIEND RUSHES UP AND HE'S SCREAMING Y'KNOW --Z ...
The fourth thing is to sell everything that isn't nailed down to hire armies. Fire any advisor who says you can't do this...
"YEW HEV NO RIGHT!!"
"YEW HEV NO RIGHT!!"
Eat only expensive food and drink only expensive liquor. It's the only good thing about being a leader.
SO I SWINGS MY SWORD AGAIN
WHACK!!
AN' I SAY "AT'S OKAY" HUH-HUH-HUH "YOU GOT NO HEAD!!
Don't attend meetings and fire advisors who tell you you have to. All you do is sit there for hours while a bunch of whiners tell you what's wrong and you can't go to the bathroom.
SO I'M LAUGHIN' SEE 'COS THE ONE GUY'S HEAD LANDS ON THE OTHER GUY'S ARM...
LIKE HE'S GIVIN' 'IM A HUG...
The only other good thing about being a leader is quitting ... everyone who bugged you all the time is unemployed or under arrest. Ha-Ha. It looks good on them, too!!
SUDDENLY, I FEEL THIS SHARP PAIN IN MY RIBS ...
I FIGGER I MUST HAVE BUST A GUT FOR REAL LAUGHIN' SO HARD...

You stop getting mad all the time because you no longer have to deal with stupid, half-witted
BUMP
I LOOKS DOWN AN' I SWEAR, THERE'S A KID WITH A PEN-KNIFE..
AN' HE'S JUST STUCK IT INTA ME UP T'TH' HILT--SO I GRIN AT 'IM, SEE? AN' I GIVE 'IM THE BOOT!!
I SWEAR--HE MUSTA FLOWN NEAR FIFTY FEET, EASY...
'E LANDS INNA RIVER LIKE A BAG O' ROCKS...
AN' WADDA YA THINK?
'IS MOTHER COMES RUNNIN' UP, HITTIN' ME ONNA CHEST...
BAF SMAT CRUK
SMASH
THE BLUE DUCK
FIN

ELFQUEST
WELL? DO YOU THINK HE'S ONE OF US?
THE EARS ARE RIGHT-- BUT HE'S DEFINITELY A CANDIDATE FOR A NOSE JOB
SNFXF!
HUH? WHAT?

OH NO
YOU'RE RIGHT, SLYWISE -- HE JUST HAS TO BE AN ELF-- HE'S ALMOST AS CUTE AS I AM...
WE CAN'T STAY LONG OR THE DIMENSION WARP WE CAME THROUGH WILL TRAP US HERE ...
BUT WE WERE WONDERING IF YOU COULD ANSWER A QUESTION FOR US...
YOU SEE, WE WERE WONDERING HOW IT WAS THAT SOMEONE WHO LOOKED SO MUCH LIKE US COULD LIVE AMONG HUMANS ...
IT'S NOT BAD ACTUALLY-- IF YOU DON'T BREATHE TOO DEEPLY...
SAY, I JUST GOT A SWELL IDEA! WHY DON'T YOU COME BACK WITH US TO OUR WORLD? WE'LL HAVE A GRAND TIME...
WE CHALLENGE EACH OTHER TO BATTLES, DEFEAT GIANT MONSTERS, RIDE WOLVES ...
YOU... RIDE...
...WOLVES?
OH, IT'S NOT DANGEROUS ...
HECK! MOST OF THEM ARE ALMOST AS CUTE AS I AM...
NOT TO MENTION ALL THE GREAT STUFF WE HAVE...
LIKE THIS MAGIC ROCK I WEAR AROUND MY NECK
IT ALWAYS POINTS NORTH ...
WELL, ACTUALLY CEREBUS WAS JUST TRYING TO CATCH UP ON HIS...

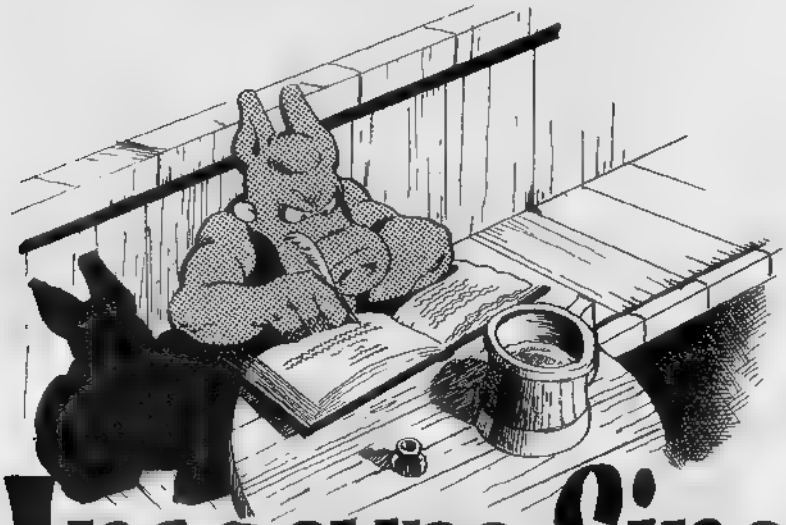
AND DREAMBERRIES!
HAVE YOU EVER HAD A SNOUTFUL OF DREAM-BERRIES?
HAH?
HAVE YOU?
HAH?
TARIM!
AND THE GIRLS! YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT!
EVERY ONE OF THEM A PERFECT 18-15-18...
HALTER-TOPS! SARONGS! MAIDENFORMS!
...AND NARY A TURTLENECK IN THE BUNCH!
WELL, TO BE HONEST, CEREBUS WAS JUST TRYING TO GET A FEW HOURS OF....
OOPS! THE WARP IS GETTING SMALLER...
LISTEN, WE'VE REALLY GOT TO BE GOING, BUT IF YOU EVER FIND A DIMENSION WARP OF YOUR OWN, DON'T BE A STRANGER...
CALL MY SECRETARY; WE'LL HAVE LUNCH...
WHAT SAY WHEN WE GET BACK THAT WE FROLIC FOR A WHILE...
WUBBA WUBBA WUBBA
WUBBA WUBBA WUBBA?
OH, LET'S DO! NOTHING MAKES ME FEEL CUTER THAN A GOOD FROLIC...
POIT!
POIT?

CEREBUS IS....
...NEVER NEVER NEVER NEVER EVER...
..GOING TO MIX ALE AND APRICOT BRANDY AGAIN
...
FIN

"On Governing"
by
Former Prime Minister Cerebus of Iest
PART the SECOND

The biggest thing you have to do is stop listening to people, except when they are telling you facts. As soon as they start saying opinions, you should stop listening. They always tell you that what you decided isn't going to be popular and then they ask you if you want to change your mind. I used to change my mind all the time when they said this, but then Cerebus started thinking, Why don't they just do what they're told? They wanted someone to make decisions, so they have an election, okay? Okay. It's like five guys out in the woods. And three of them say "So-and-so will be the leader." Okay? Okay. Now you've settled it. When so-and-so says "As leader, I think we should go this way" you don't stop and argue. That's why you made him leader. Cerebus thinks that after you vote, you should shut up and do as you're told or go to jail. Period. Otherwise nothing gets done.

Be careful, too, about farting around your butler. You shouldn't fart around anyone, really, because they start stammering and stuttering and you never find out what they were going to say and if you yell at them for stammering, they wet their pants. But especially not your butler, because if you fart when he's bringing you your soup, he spills it all over you.



the Insecure Sinecure

"AH! CEREBUS!" CRIES YOUNG LORD SILVERSPOON "WE HAVE FOUND A FRIENDLY FACE AT LAST...."
"AFTER YOU, MY GOOD FRIEND" MURMURS LORD TRYSTRIM. "YOUR OBEDIENT SERVANT" SAYS LORD GWAINE "CLOVIS' PERFUME AND POWDER PUFF" MUTTERS THE EARTH-PIG BORN.
"I HAVE HAD MY EMPLOYMENT TERMINATED" WONKS THE YOUNG SNOB, ADDING, LACONICALLY "IF YOU CAN IMAGINE SUCH A THING"
"FIFTY CROWNS AND AN EVICTION NOTICE" HE WHINES. "IT IS AN OUTRAGE AGAINST MY MARKET VALUE AS AN OFFICIAL EMBARRASSMENT TO MY FATHER'S ADMINISTRATION."
"OFFICIAL EMBARRASSMENT?" QUERIES THE AARDVARK.
"DID I NOT TOAST THE PIRATES WHO HAVE BEEN DECIMATING MY FATHER'S SHIPPING FLEET?" POUTS THE YOUNG ARISTOCRAT. "DID I NOT WRITE LETTERS CONDEMNING PALNU'S EXPANSIONIST POLICIES?"
"INDEED, YOU DID," AGREES TRYSTRIM.
"YOU DID INDEED," CONCURS GWAINE

"I EVEN TOLD THE STORY OF HOW LORD JULIUS SHOT HIMSELF IN THE FOOT WHILE LEARNING HOW TO FIRE A CROSSBOW," HE SIGHS. "THEY JUST DIDN'T REALIZE MY VALUE."
"THAT'LL BE SIX BITS," INTERRUPTS THE WAITER
"I SEEM TO HAVE MISPLACED MY PURSE" INTERJECTS TRYSTRIM.
THE EARTH-PIG BITES HIS TONGUE.
"WHAT DID I DO WITH THAT HALF CROWN?" FUMES GWANE.
"HERE," ANSWERS SILVERSPOON "TAKE THIS AND GET OUT OF MY SIGHT UNTIL WE NEED MORE ALE."
"WHY -- THANK YOU, M'LORD," STAMMERS THE WAITER.
"THIS MUG IS FILTHY" SNORTS TRYSTRIM
"THIS ALE IS WATERY," WHINES GWANE
"I THINK IT IS TIME TO WRITE A LETTER" MUSES SILVERSPOON
"PAPER AND INK" DEMANDS TRYSTRIM, SNAPPING HIS FINGERS
"PAPER AND INK" ECHOES GWANE WITH MILITARY PRECISION.

"AND A PEN AS WELL," ADDS TRYSTRIM.
"A - UH -- PEN" REITERATES GWANE UNCERTAINLY AS HE SEARCHES HIS POCKETS.
"MY DEAR COUNTESS DETIN COMMA" HE DICTATES, "HAVING HEARD ABOUT MY FATHER'S REFUSAL TO DEFER TAXATION ON YOUR HOLDINGS IN PALNU COMMA I AM MOVED TO OFFER MY SERVICES PERIOD I WOULD REQUIRE ONLY FOOD AND SHELTER FOR MYSELF AND TWO COMPANIONS PARENTHESIS WHO WILL AID ME IN SEEKING JUSTICE FOR YOU PARENTHESIS PERIOD"
"PEN - TWO CROWNS" SUGGESTS CEREBUS GREEDILY.
"SOLD." ANNOUNCES SILVERSPOON
"I SAY - HOW WOULD YOU LIKE A NICE REST IN THE COUNTRY WHILE YOU WORK ON YOUR MEMOIRS" ASKS SILVERSPOON
"MY WHAT?" GROWLS CEREBUS
"YOUR HISTORY -- YOUR BOOK" HE EXPLAINS NASALLY
"WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY 'BOOK' THE FIRST TIME," GRUMBLES THE AARDVARK
"I AM PLEASED TO INFORM YOU COMMA AS WELL COMMA THAT THE FORMER KITCHEN STAFF SUPERVISOR SLASH PRIME MINISTER WILL BE JOINING US PERIOD PLEASE CONTACT ME AT THE ADDRESS BELOW PERIOD YOURS TRULY ET CETERA," HE CONCLUDES.

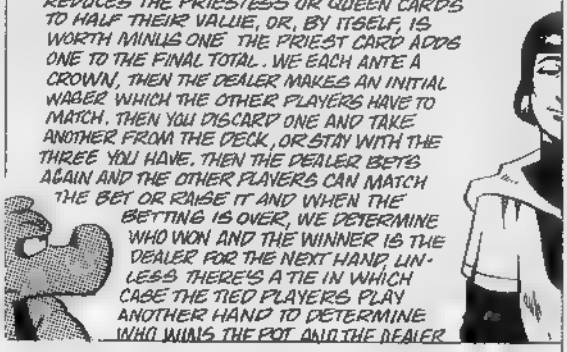
"WELL, ENOUGH OF LETTER-WRITING," CRIES YOUNG SILVERSPOON CHEERFULLY, "NOW, YOU AND TRYSTRIM AND I MUST HAVE A GAME OF CARDS. GWANE DOESN'T PLAY." "DIAMONDBACK²" ASKS THE EARTH-PIG, MENTALLY LICKING HIS LIPS.

"HEAVENS NO--A GAME OF PRIESTESS! NO ONE PLAYS DIAMONDBACK ANYMORE," HE ADMONISHES DEPRECATINGLY

"CEREBUS HAS NEVER HEARD OF IT" THE AARDVARK GRUMBLES. "IT'S EVER SO SIMPLE," ENTHUSES SILVERSPOON

"EVEN YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND IT" HE ADDS.

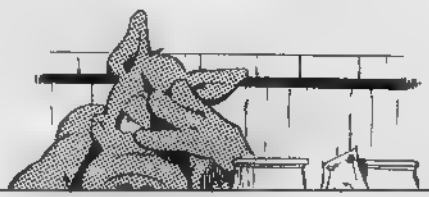
"WE EACH GET THREE CARDS. THE PRIESTESS IS WORTH FOUR, THE WHITE QUEEN IS WORTH PLUS TWO, THE BLACK QUEEN IS WORTH MINUS TWO. THE GOLD CARD DOUBLES THE VALUE OF THE PRIESTESS OR QUEEN CARDS OR, WITHOUT THEM, IS WORTH ONE POINT. THE SWORD CARD DOESN'T DO ANYTHING. THE SCEPTER CARD REDUCES THE PRIESTESS OR QUEEN CARDS TO HALF THEIR VALUE, OR, BY ITSELF, IS WORTH MINUS ONE. THE PRIEST CARD ADDS ONE TO THE FINAL TOTAL. WE EACH ANTE A CROWN, THEN THE DEALER MAKES AN INITIAL WAGER WHICH THE OTHER PLAYERS HAVE TO MATCH. THEN YOU DISCARD ONE AND TAKE ANOTHER FROM THE DECK, OR STAY WITH THE THREE YOU HAVE. THEN THE DEALER BETS AGAIN AND THE OTHER PLAYERS CAN MATCH THE BET OR RAISE IT AND WHEN THE BETTING IS OVER, WE DETERMINE WHO WON AND THE WINNER IS THE DEALER FOR THE NEXT HAND, UNLESS THERE'S A TIE IN WHICH CASE THE TIED PLAYERS PLAY ANOTHER HAND TO DETERMINE WHO WINS THE POT AND THE DEALER



"CEREBUS DOESN'T HAVE ANY MONEY" MUTTERS CEREBUS EVASIVELY

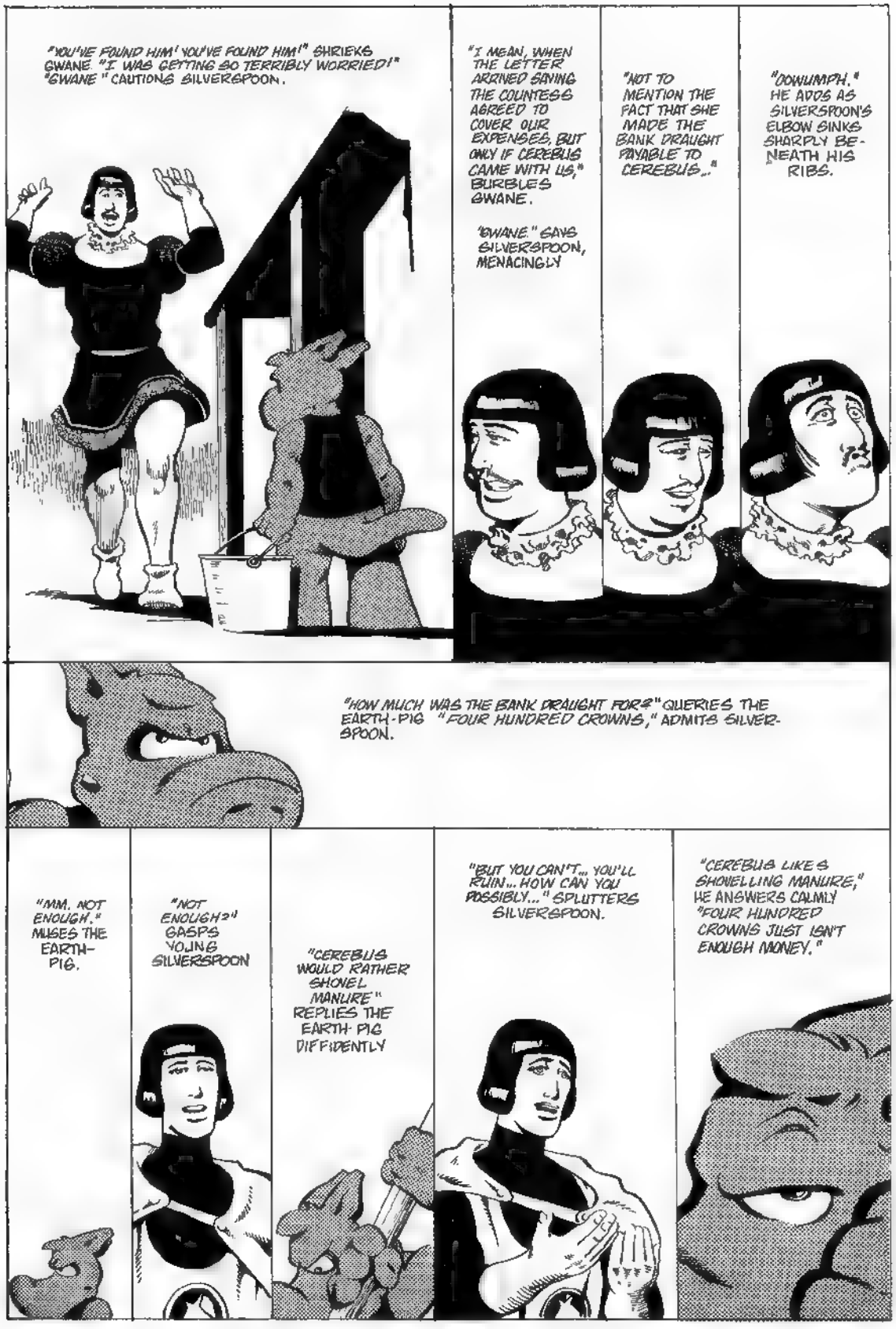
"DON'T BE SUCH A KILL JOY" LECTURES THE YOUNG ARISTOCRAT. "I HAVE PLENTY TO GO AROUND."

"I'LL DEAL FIRST" HE OFFERS, RAPIDLY SHUFFLING THE CARDS.



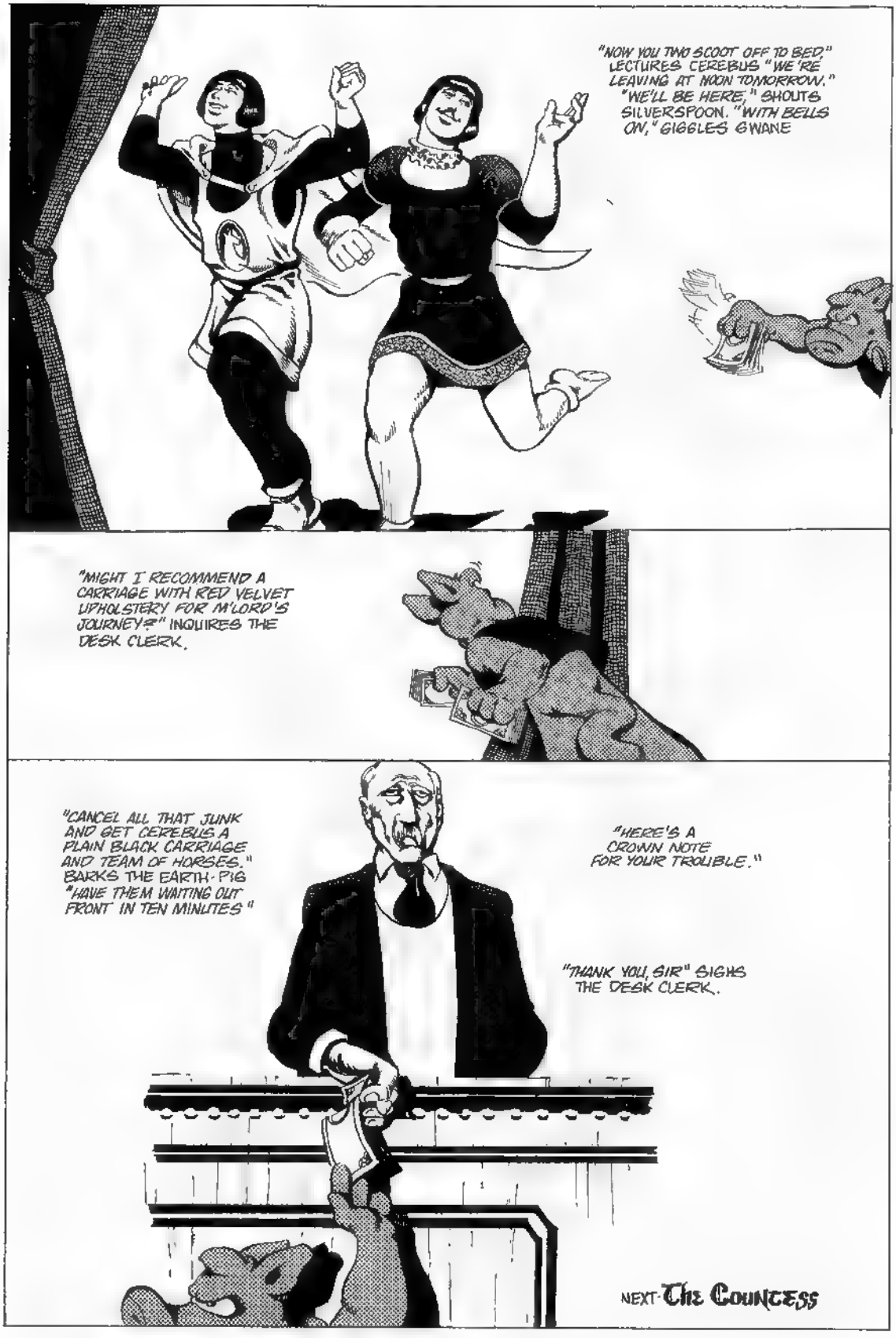
"TWO CROWNS," WAGERS SILVERSPOON, IGNORING HIM.
"TWO CROWNS," CHIRPS TRYSTRIM, AGREEABLY.
"TWO CROWNS," ADDS CEREBUS, HAVING DECIDED THERE ARE WORSE THINGS IN LIFE THAN GAMBLING WITH SOMEONE ELSE'S MONEY
"I'LL TAKE ONE" SAYS SILVERSPOON.
"ONE" SAYS TRYSTRIM.
"ONE" SAYS CEREBUS
"CEREBUS CAN'T STAND 'CLUTE' CARD GAMES," SNARLS THE EARTH-PIG
"THREE CROWNS" ASSERTS SILVERSPOON, HIS SCALP TINGLING WITH EXCITEMENT
"THREE CROWNS" SNAPS TRYSTRIM, WITH GREAT GUSTO.
"THREE CROWNS" MUTTERS CEREBUS UNCERTAINLY..
"PRIESTESS, WHITE QUEEN, SWORD. THAT'S SIX," CHORTLES SILVERSPOON
"SWORD, SWORD, PRIEST," SIGHS TRYSTRIM. "THAT'S ONE."
"BLACK QUEEN, GOLD, GOLD... MINUS... UH... EIGHT," MURMURS CEREBUS.
HIS COMPANIONS STIFLE IMPOLITE GIGGLES.

"TWO CROWNS," WAGERS SILVERSPOON, HOPING TO LIGHTEN THE MOOD
2
"HA HA, TWO CROWNS," ANSWERS TRYSTRIM, FOLLOWING HIS LEAD
3
"THIS DAMN GAME IS RIGGED" BELLOWS CEREBUS, HURLING TWO BLACK QUEENS AND A SWORD CARD INTO THE AIR
"TWO DAMN CROWNS" GROWLS CEREBUS IN AN ATTEMPT TO RESTORE A FUNEREAL GRIMNESS
4
"I THINK I SHALL STAY WITH THESE CARDS" WINKS SILVERSPOON PLAYFULLY
5
"CEREBUS DOESN'T WANT TO PLAY ANYMORE," SULKS THE EARTH-PIG "ONE MORE HAND," CAJOLES SILVERSPOON "YOU'VE JUST HAD A BIT OF BAD LUCK."
"AND I, TOO" CHUCKLES TRYSTRIM, CARELESSLY SHAKING HIS CURLS.
6
"CEREBUS WILL TAKE ANOTHER DAMN CARD" HE SNAPS, THROUGH CLENCHED TEETH.
7
"WELL I NEVER" SNORTS SILVERSPOON. "OF ALL THE NERVE" CLUCKS TRYSTRIM. "AYE," AGREES GWANE AS THE TRIO LEAVE IN A HUFF (A FAVOURITE MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION)
"FIVE CROWNS" WAGERS SILVERSPOON, HAPPILY
8
"AND ANOTHER FIVE," RESPONDS TRYSTRIM WITH GLEE
9
"ALE," SHOUTS THE EARTH-PIG, WAVING THE TWO CROWNS HE GOT FOR HIS PEN.


"YOU'VE FOUND HIM! YOU'VE FOUND HIM!" SHRIEKS GWANE. "I WAS GETTING SO TERRIBLY WORRIED!"
"GWANE," CAUTIONS SILVERSPOON.
"I MEAN, WHEN THE LETTER ARRIVED SAYING THE COUNTESS AGREED TO COVER OUR EXPENSES, BUT ONLY IF CEREBUS CAME WITH US," BURBLES GWANE.
"GWANE," SAYS SILVERSPOON, MENACINGLY
"NOT TO MENTION THE FACT THAT SHE MADE THE BANK DRAUGHT PAYABLE TO CEREBUS..."
"OOHUMPH," HE ADDS AS SILVERSPOON'S ELBOW SINKS SHARPLY BENEATH HIS RIBS.
"HOW MUCH WAS THE BANK DRAUGHT FOR?" QUERIES THE EARTH-PIG. "FOUR HUNDRED CROWNS," ADMITS SILVERSPOON.
"MM. NOT ENOUGH," MUSES THE EARTH-PIG.
"NOT ENOUGH?!" GASPS YOUNG SILVERSPOON
"CEREBUS WOULD RATHER SHOVEL MANURE" REPLIES THE EARTH-PIG DIFFIDENTLY
"BUT YOU CAN'T... YOU'LL RUIN... HOW CAN YOU POSSIBLY..." SPLUTTERS SILVERSPOON.
"CEREBUS LIKES SHOVELLING MANURE," HE ANSWERS CALMLY "FOUR HUNDRED CROWNS JUST ISN'T ENOUGH MONEY."

"WAIT- WAIT!" WHINES THE PALNAN HEIR "I HAVE SOME MONEY OF MY OWN! ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY .. FIFTY... SIXTY-ONE ...SIXTY-TWO... SIXTY-THREE.. SEVENTY-THREE ...SEVENTY... THAT'S ALMOST SIX HUNDRED CROWNS."
"WELL, I DON'T KNOW," CEREBUS PAUSES, "HMM."
"AND MY HAND-DRAWN DECK OF PRIESTESS CARDS," HE WHIMPERS. "YOU COULD SELL THEM FOR AT LEAST FIFTY-FIVE CROWNS."
"WELL, OKAY," ACQUIESCES THE EARTH-PIG, GRUDGINGLY "WE'LL HAVE A WONDERFUL TIME," ENTHUSES YOUNG SILVERSPOON. "INDEED," AGREES GWANE. "SHE THROWS THE BEST PARTIES IN SEPRANIA PROVINCE."

"ACTUALLY, YOU'RE RIGHT," SAYS CEREBUS, BRIGHTLY "SIX HUNDRED CROWNS IS A LOT OF MONEY WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO HAVE A SPLENDID HOLIDAY." SILVERSPOON AND GWANE EAGERLY AGREE. "OH, YES," THEY CRY "A SPLENDID HOLIDAY."
AT THE DESK, CEREBUS (AFTER SETTLING HIS OWN ACCOUNT), ARRANGES PROVISIONS FOR A NOON DEPARTURE "AN OPEN CARRIAGE, I SHOULD THINK, WITH A FOOTMAN AND DRIVER," ORDERS CEREBUS. "AND WHITE HORSES," SIMPERS SILVERSPOON "WHITE HORSES, IT IS", AGREES THE EARTH-PIG. "VERY GOOD, SIR" GROVELS THE DESK CLERK
"ASIDE FROM THAT, WE'LL NEED A BIG PICNIC BASKET FULL OF CUCUMBER SANDWICHES NO CRUSTS," SPECIFIES CEREBUS. "AND WINE--SOMETHING SORT OF STICKY AND SWEET." "STRAWBERRY-FLAVOURED CHAMPAGNE, SIR?" "PERFECT," CONCLUDES CEREBUS
"THIS IS GOING TO BE SUCH A FUN TRIP" THE YOUNG ARISTOCRATS EXCLAIM WITH DELIGHT. "I SHALL BE PLEASED TO MAKE ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS," SAYS THE DESK CLERK, HIS EYES LOCKED ON CEREBUS' WAD OF BANK NOTES


"NOW YOU TWO SCOOT OFF TO BED," LECTURES CEREBUS "WE'RE LEAVING AT NOON TOMORROW."
"WE'LL BE HERE," SHOUTS SILVERSPOON. "WITH BELLS ON," GIGGLES GWANE
"MIGHT I RECOMMEND A CARRIAGE WITH RED VELVET UPHOLSTERY FOR M'LORD'S JOURNEY?" INQUIRES THE DESK CLERK.
"CANCEL ALL THAT JUNK AND GET CEREBUS A PLAIN BLACK CARRIAGE AND TEAM OF HORSES," BARKS THE EARTH-PIG "HAVE THEM WAITING OUT FRONT IN TEN MINUTES"
"HERE'S A CROWN NOTE FOR YOUR TROUBLE."
"THANK YOU, SIR" SIGHS THE DESK CLERK.
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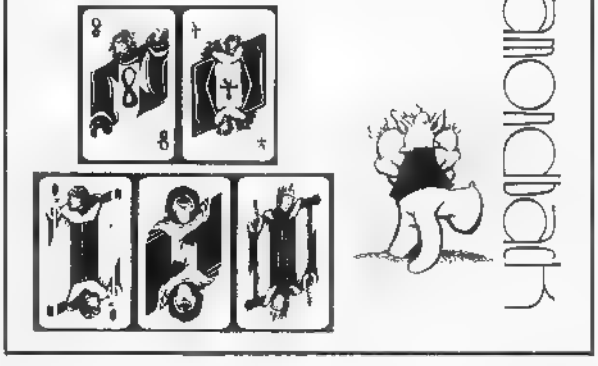

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AS YOU MAY RECALL FROM LAST TIME, MASTER CRIMINAL GELVING SHAVINSKY AND HILDA HIS ROBOT, ALONG WITH HIS LITTLE BROTHER SEDRIG, HAVE BUILT A GIANT ROBOT DINOSAUR WITH WHICH THEY PLAN TO DESTROY THE ENTIRE CIVILIZED WORLD AND PART OF PEORIA..! NEAT, HUH?? BUT, CPL. KELLY O'HARE -CUTEY BUNNY AND FATTY TUBBINS-ASTRO CAT, IN SEEKING TO HALT THIS MAD SCHEME, HAVE NOT UNEXPECTEDLY BEEN CAPTURED...AFTER ALL THAT'S WHAT USUALLY HAPPENS, ..RIGHT??

MERE MOMENTS (AND ONE PANEL) LATER KELLY AND TUGGINS ARE IN HOT PURSUIT !!
WE'LL CATCH THEM IN NO TIME ! THEY CAN'T HAVE GOTTEN FAR IN THAT TRUCK !!
I THINK THEY WENT THAT WAY..
BUH..
I DON'T GET IT TUGGINS! WE SHOULD HAVE CAUGHT UP WITH THEM BY NOW...
HELLVILLE
HEL...
GET BACK TUGGINS! OH!
WHOP
GRRRRRR
...
LEGO! - THEY WERE HIDIN' IN THE BUSHES !!
YA HA HA HAAAA! DER BUNNY IST MINE! SPECIAL SPECIAL VERY SPECIAL KAP !!

G-GET B-BACK ! THIS LINOLEUM GUN IS-IS L-LOADED..!
HAW HAW ! HERE KITTY, KITTY...
FWIP FWIP FWIP FWIP FWIP FWIP FWIP FWIP
WHEN ALL YOU HAVE IS A LINOLEUM GUN, YOU HAVE TO BE GOOD...
WHILE AT THAT VERY INSTANT SECOND, OUR ENTRAPPED HEROINE IS ABOUT TO BECOME BUNNY BURGERS...WHEN WITH ONE MORE RUB OF HER MYSTIC EGYPTIAN AMULET...
GELVING, NOW I'M PISSED!!
AND YOU'RE GONNA BE ROBOT CUTLETS!
COME OUT GELVING! I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE SOMEWHERE!
AH HA!
HIMMEL?

GET HER HILDA!
BACK OFF, ROBOT, OR I'LL DICE YOU UP TOO!
SWANG
HILDA, HILDA, GET UP!! ZOOPS, HER BATTERIES MUST BE DEAD...BUT SCHTILL, YOU VILL NEFER TAKE ME ALIVE!
HEH, HEH... ON SECOND THOUGHT....
VAS?!?
SO WHO SAYS I WANT TO TAKE YOU ALIVE, YOJ MISERABLE LITTLE RUNT?!?
AND SO...
JUST THINK KELLY...IF IT WASN'T FOR ME YOU'D STILL BE BACK IN THE OFFICE TYPIN' OUT FORMS AN STUFF, INSTEAD OF SAVING THE WORLD!?
SAY... THAT'S RIGHT!
LATE, LATE LATE THAT NIGHT...
CHEER UP, TUBBINS! ONLY 37 MORE OF THESE FORMS TO TYPE IN TRIPLICATE...AN' THEN YOU CAN GO HOME...
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THE END

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Since Dave is lying exhausted in a corner of the studio after trying to finish this issue and the next before the Canadian Tour, I'm trying to keep this show on the road on my own. Well-ll, not really. I mean, somebody had to do the stories, right? So for now, here's a small sample of the reaction to the end of High Society. I will admit that I had no idea what to expect.

We're going to run the letters on "High Society" without comment in this issue and the next and Dave will try and address as many of the points raised in one long answer in #53. See you then.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Dear Mr Sim

I've spent today rereading all fifty issues of CEREBUS, and while it would be sensible to wait for *The Comics Journal* to state the official position, I must go ahead and voice enthusiastic approval for your achievement

Obviously the "High Society" graphic novel is unique in comics history on this continent, but it also compares favorably with most prose stories, and it holds up in dramatic terms as well. Given its meticulous depiction of the intricacies of politics, economics, character, and an entire stratum of society, "High Society" reminds me of the little I've read of Balzac -- I think the comparison is valid in terms of intent, if not (yet!) depth. Congratulations

High points for me were the opening salvo (#26), Hadden's "seduction" (#30), "The Night Before," the entire campaign sequence (#40-44) — five issues and not a wrong note sounded! — and the delightful "vertigo" section of #49. The art is brilliant, the dialogue and timing razor-sharp, and large sections are hilarious. I liked the nice tricks with panel borders and balloons, and your care even in such trifles as maintaining the same cross-hatch technique throughout an issue is appreciated. The pacing was excellent throughout, except for #33 and #34, which were slow and awkwardly padded. With the reprints please consider deleting or editing a few pages

As long as it's clear that this is basically a valentine, I'd like to mention some points which may be errors of structure or story. First, the novel didn't really begin with #26, because important points hinged on episodes from earlier in the run -- Cerebus being ranking diplomatic representative, "Mind Game II," the Moon Roach, Bran and his prophecies, the Conniptins, to some extent even Jaka. Sometimes references to previous sequences were gratuitous "in-jokes", such as bringing in Teresa for no reason. This kind of thing is probably a mistake, because the presumed "novel" (#26-50) is less able to stand on its own (Also it makes it harder to turn friends on to CEREBUS. Could you at some point do a stand-alone issue which reestablishes everything, as a sort of presentation piece?)

The novel might gain considerably if you revised "Mind Games II" to present necessary exposition and remove a few of the red herrings. "Necessary exposition" brings up some plot points

On rereading, the "exodus inward" becomes fairly clear, but you didn't tell enough about the split between the Eastern and Western churches (which made #50 something of a rabbit out of a hat), nor why the Albatross could reunite them (that is, why was this "duck statue" so important?) and while the climax of #49 was a spectacularly funny surprise, it would have been nice if #50 had given some slight explanation of how the Conniptins survived K'cor's poison and grew so powerful. Naturally you can't very well have people spout exposition to each other, but this constant "offstage development" is tiring. Too many rabbits out of too many invisible hats

"Denouement" was unsatisfying in other ways too, including a couple of points of character. I liked the Citizen Kane riff of Cerebus shutting the door on Astoria, but the supposed revelation of Astoria's motives produced only a dull thud. Astoria -- duchess, Cirinist, hard-boiled politico, conniving conspirator -- a suffragette? Whether or not it's true is immaterial. It falls flat because (a) you never made it clear that women in Iest can't vote (the idea never occurred to me—should I be smug or ashamed?), and (b) a noble cause arouses our sympathy for Astoria at an inappropriate moment, when she hasn't behaved sympathetically at any point since #32. It's a jarring inconsistency

Even Cerebus, who has been brilliantly consistent ever since he dropped the Roy Thomas speech patterns, displays uncharacteristic sorrow in #50. Of course he has plenty to cry about, but seeing such emotion portrayed forces us to reconsider him. Cerebus (it seems in retrospect), for all his magnetism, has been a construct, an embodiment of most human vices, redeemed by competence and dry wit hence his inhuman appearance and his literal and figurative "soullessness." I regarded him as human, but only in the way I accepted (say) Uncle Scrooge as human -- never as some real person. When he shows such feeling -- such "soul", if you will — as he does in #50, troublesome questions begin to bother the reader. "Who or what is this creature exactly? Why isn't anyone curious about him?" Et cetera. The usual "origin" questions. Up to now I never cared much about the aardvark's origin, any more than I wondered where he sheathed his sword between fights. But if you're going to expand his character beyond symbolic dimensions, I'd like to know more about him. (Could it be that you engineered that touching scene to inspire just such curiosity in us?)

The main points of dissatisfaction about "Denouement" are thematic: the ending -- enshrining, as it were, a theme barely developed in the events of the previous 24 issues -- and the various dedications. Deni mentioned in her prefatory note -- only the one to Gene Day is appropriate.

Suentieus Po of Harbourside, sacrificing his own freedom in the cause of liberty, naturally appears heroic, as do Lech Walesa and the posthumous idealization of Kennedy. But "High Society" thoroughly, comprehensively, systematically undermines values of just the sort these men espouse. The only idealists the novel presents are Bran Macmuffin, a pompous snob and religious fanatic; Po, who ends up imprisoned, Inquistors; the Moon Roach, a hopeless lunatic played for laughs; and spear-carriers like Pinshaw, also laughable. Each and every other character of any intelligence in "High Society" is motivated by greed and guided by relentless cynicism. True, they do not succeed in achieving their goals, but this hardly constitutes a ringing endorsement of idealism, since the believers are dragged down along with the cynics. Cerebus is casting about for something to believe in, but so far all he's seen should serve to convince him that idealism is synonymous with naivete and gullibility

As for the Wendy Pini dedication, it's inapplicable: there are no "real heroes" in CEREBUS. If the conclusion in #50 is meant to say that imperfect individuals can inspire heroism through their images (even when not through their examples), the fact still remains.

I've wandered from writing a burbling love letter. Let me reiterate that comics on this side of the Atlantic (and maybe the other, for all I know) have seldom before produced so vast, complex, provocative, mature, and cohesive a piece of work as your fifty issues of CEREBUS. (I keep wanting to erase "seldom" and put in "never", and by issue #100 I probably will). I wish you enormous success and I hope your work proves influential; but as

(Aardvark-Vanaheim photo by Deni)

Dave Sim demonstrates his new old bad habit and his new/old post "High Society" haircut at Larry Mirando's Incredible Pulp store in Baldwin, NY.

Portraits of Dem and Dave (both clean-shaven) taken at Aardvarks, Albinos and Aliens in Weedsport, NY.
(Aardvark-Vanaheim photo by Ken Hahn)

the burgeoning alternative comic market is bringing out more of the same old stuff, I fear you have outdistanced your peers by too wide a margin. Still, we may hope.

Do you even want a letter like this one? Every issue, you produce work that seems to demand informed response, yet the letter column is given to costume photos and boffo yocks. How would you like me to react? Somebody said that what an artists wants from his public is three minutes of closely-reasoned praise; if so, please ignore my minor criticisms above, and accept this instead.

I usually visit my local comic shop on Sundays. (Comics & Comix in Palo Alto) But as the release date for CEREBUS #50 approached, I started going more often, and then pestering the staff with phone calls. "Is it in yet?" After I got off work Saturday evening (yesterday) I called again, and at last it had arrived. Ordinarily I would have gotten it the next day; but I could not wait eighteen hours to read the conclusion of "High Society". I took the next bus to make it before closing, then read it all, every word, right there in the store. Now I've spent an entire Sunday reading CEREBUS and composing this letter. I hope you don't think I've wasted my time; I don't.

Yours with great admiration,

Allen Varney
664 College Avenue,
Stanford, CA., 94306

* * * * * * * * * *

Dear Dave and Deni Sim,

I got my Cerebus 50 a few days ago, read it, and then, as Deni suggested, pulled out my back issues and started re-reading in sequence, starting with Swords of Cerebus I. (I'm missing about eight issues in the middle, since I've only been reading comics two years, so not quite 50 in all).

Good heavens, you've got a whole world built up there. Impressive. The details build into a far more coherent world-picture when you can see the whole flow, rather than just one frame at a time. Congratulations. I'm curious -- did you work out the background first and then see how it impinged upon your story, or write the story and then go backward and work out the super-structure from that?

Small questions that arose as I read. What was Jaka doing staying at the Bridge-is-Out Inn, just before Cerebus and assorted drunks arrived? And why do the head of the mercenaries and the artist guy who lives way out in the boonies patronize the same hairdresser?

Cerebus as literature? That, we'll have to wait and see. The traditional measure of literature is time. Dickens (and Shakespeare) wrote for the popular masses. It's only when fifty years later people are still reading and crying over stupid little Nell's death, that pulp is elected to partial immortality. I plan on sticking around to see it.

And why issue 300, by the way, to bring it to an end? That will only be another 13 years or so, given the present publishing schedule. What about issue 3,000? That way, since neither of you can shuffle off this mortal coil until the epic is complete, both of you will live to ripe old ages. Think of it as life insurance. Cerebus is tough. He can take an extra three thousand issues or so.

Eileen Roy
4569 West 173 Cres
Lawndale, CA., 90260

* * * * * * * * * *

Dear Dave

If you don't feel up to any irritation today, you can toss this, because I'm afraid it's mostly carping.

CEREBUS #50 was a good issue per se. But I'm afraid I didn't think it was much of a denouement; it was more like an amputation. Perhaps that's inevitable in a continuing series, just as the middle volumes of trilogies tend to sag. I'm just now working in Connecticut, away from all my back Cerebi, so maybe the problem is in my memory; but I think I'll take a chance that it isn't.

To you the end of the Exodus Inward may seem inevitable; for me, it came in from nowhere, making all that went before (except the Testan debts) irrelevant.

To you the tearful farewell to the Elf may seem natural, but I don't recall anything leading up to it. When I think back, except perhaps for that early wickets game, I only remember Cerebus accepting her help, or tolerating her one-way affection, the only hint I recall that it might be mutual was in the letter column.

Almost from the beginning you've presented Suenteus Po the Lesser as an easily-manipulated cowardly fop, such people can rise above themselves, and it's nice to be reminded of it, but it's a flip-flop more than a denouement. (I presume, from the nicely printed format we've seen, that S P and L. will ultimately make it out of the prison and to a printer, or at least his writings will; that's good.)

A stylistic point. 'Cerebus thought he could make a *difference* ...' maybe a natural thing for him to say, in Estarcion terms but in our world it's a phrase one expects rather from disillusioned idealists, and if Cerebus is an idealist I'm an aardvark. So it jarred me.

Finally, the appearance of the albatross would seem to be intended as irony, that Cerebus had the key to success all the time. But if it's the real thing, either (1) the dam duck statchoo *wasn't* the albatross after all (looks more like a chicken than a duck anyway), and all the kidnapping and drugging and pawnbroker-interrogation was irrelevant, or (2) someone stole the albatross shortly after Cerebus arrived and put it back later -- for safety's sake, probably not until the Exodus Inward ended -- destroys the irony; and in either case, in place of denouement, you've tied another knot. Or have I forgotten a second delivery from the artist?

A couple of things were finished off well. Astoria's motive is a satisfying explanation of her support for Cerebus, though it's got to be far less than half the story. And I've wondered for years what Lord Julius' niece was doing dancing in a tavern. This revelation had me saying 'of *course*!' and wondering if everyone else knew it all along. Inevitable but unsuspected; that's the sort of thing I like to see in an ending.

And as I say, if this weren't #50 I wouldn't be complaining. I particularly liked the echoing empty spaces at the start, Astoria's expressions, and all the closing scenes.

Philip M. Cohen
726 Golf Course Road,
Ahqupper, PA.

* * * * * * * * * *

Dear Dave and Deni,

I'm going to be real honest with you. There are times that I haven't enjoyed reading Cerebus.

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At one time or another, he's shown a complete lack of one trait in his character that has annoyed me beyond reason. Yet, I stuck it out. It had to be in there somewhere, didn't it?

Please?

Issue #50, the final installment of the High Society finally gave me a taste of what I was looking for. Oh sure, there was the final resolution with Astoria (I was sort of hoping to see her h t once or twice), the final answer to the Albatross, but that's not what made the issue so special.

Cerebus showed (gasp) emotion. I knew it was in there somewhere. The farewell between he and the elf was perfect, and well within the character I've come to know and tolerate ("Don't be ridiculous, I have some soot in m★" Nice touch!)

Don't get me wrong. I don't want you to turn Cerebus into Aardvark Love. However, neither would I like to see Cerebus start slashing and killing everything that lives. Let's let DC Comics show us that kind of fun. If you can just keep the balance of sword and satire, and always keep Cerebus acting like a real person (Aardvark---whatever), you'll have a loyal fan until issue #300.

Fanatically yours,

Steve Marmel
7062 North Crawford,
Lincolnwood, ILL., 60646

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dear Dave,

I had to write and congratulate you on the occasion of your 50th, a fine and special issue indeed. No, no, I'm not going to launch into a long and boring review complete with character analysis and a detailed dissection of the plot. Save that for the literary critics. Suffice it to say that CEREBUS #50, including the ending's surprise twist, was a perfect culmination to the "High Society" storyline. And in a market super-saturated with those long-underwear types, here we have a book with nary a punch thrown, no scenes of dismemberment or death, and not even a hint of bloody gore -- and it works. (would somebody please tell that to the Big Boys in New York? Or better still, let's keep it a close secret. Why let them cash in on a good thing?) And the poignant farewell with the Regency Elf cut straight to my heart and left this otherwise jaded reader blinking away a few stray tears. Who says romance in comics is dead?

I felt a slight touch of nostalgia to see Cerebus don his long-forgotten vest and medallions and although I'll miss the political intricacies of "High Society" I'm looking forward to our beloved aardvark straightening himself out once again -- both literally and figuratively. Best of luck (as if you really need it!) with the next 250.

Diana Schutz
6616 Telegraph Avenue,
Oakland, CA.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dear Dave,

"High Society" has been a wonder and a treasure. Can I take time and space to try and define why?

1) I've been reading comics as an adult for 16 years now and in that time followed a good number of multi-issue stories month by month with much pleasure and enchantment. None of them have shown such narrative command as this one: the range of plot situations, pacing, the number and variety of strongly-individuated characters, tone and control.

2) The detail and thoroughness of the background you've created surpasses that of many literary (i.e. purely verbal) fantasies, let alone comic ones. Iest is probably solider in my mind than Leiber's Lankhmar, and has much of the vividness conjured up by the great city-portraits of the nineteenth century novelists. That's just one aspect—add the network of political and religious forces, the economic aspects, and you have a fantasy world that challenges comparison with all but the very best of them.

3) The writing has been a constant delight. The humour and the endless flow of memorable phrases which first attracted me to Cerebus when I was introduced to some early issues has continued, but on top of that you've added an increasingly sharp and finely-tuned dialogue that accurately reflects--as a knife--blade?--the emotional manouvers and conquests that people engage in when they talk.

You've also, over these 25 issues, virtually wiped out the narrative caption, which in some ways is the place where comics have stayed closest to their origins in pulp-fiction, and which always seemed to me an invitation to self-indulgence that even the best comic-scripters took up far too often.

4) Your art too has leapt and bounded forward even from where it was when the story started. It has become incredibly transparent —it can convey a sense of physical space and texture that isn't purely decorative but conveys simultaneously the mood and the tensions of the scene's inhabitants. But what one is always conscious of is the mood -- only afterwards does one go back and become conscious of your technique as a thing in itself.

Your writing and your art have both become more limpid and tactful and apparently more at your command than those of anyone else I've come across in comics.

5) Any of these things is rare enough to be able to enjoy them all at once is unparalleled. Yet as far as I'm concerned, one thing more is important. I'm probably long in the tooth as most of your readers go—35 years and rising faster than I'd like—and my main pleasures are in mainstream classic literature. I've always believed that there was no inherent reason why comics shouldn't be able to attempt the same mountains that the great poets and novelists have scaled.

But I've become very disappointed at seeing even the best of the kind grind down into a stream of 'death of the cosmiverse' epics or the incredible grossness and bloodiness of at least one highly-respected current artist. I've become all too used to thinking 'good---of its kind' or 'good ---- apart from the obligatory fight scene'.

I don't have to with Cerebus. You've done what I hoped comics could always do. You've taken the small satisfactions of life, very lonely and private emotions and basically realistic and unheroic situations, and you've imaged their complexity and power and magic. My best pleasures are the ones I don't have to make any allowances for. At last, with Cerebus and "High Society" you have shown me a comic I don't have to make allowances for. My congratulations and my thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Gerald Baker
Flat 1, 37, Brondesbury Park,
London, NW6, U.K.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Lastly: We get some crazy letters from time to time in the mail, but I felt I just had to share these two with you:

Dear Dave & Deni

I bet you think I buy Cerebus for the dazzling scripts. Well, that used to be true, but not anymore.

Now you probably think I buy Cerebus for the beautiful, expressive artwork. Also once a truism, but no longer.

By now, you're probably scratching your heads and wondering, *why does this guy read Cerebus?* Time for a desperate guess. Is it Deni's editorials? Nice try, but no. The editorials are fun but they're not the reason I buy Cerebus.

The back-up features? Also a good guess, but nope.

No, I read Cerebus for the *really* fun part: the letters from Mike Bannon. A letter from Mike Bannon is worth the cover price. Let's see more letters from Mike Bannon.

Sincerely,

Derek McCulloch, President
Mike Bannon Fan Club
1752-61 Street,
Edmonton, Alberta
T6L 1N2

PS: Harpo's real name *was* Adolph. He changed it to Arthur circa WWII for obvious reasons. Take The Word Of One Who Knows.

PPS: I add PSes because that's what Mike Bannon does. His letters are rilly neat.

PPPS: Anyone interested in official Mike Bannon merchandise can contact me at the above address. We're hoping to have Mike Bannon dolls and Mike Bannon bubble gum cards and Mike Bannon underoos out for fall '84.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dear Guys:

Thanks for printing Mike Bannon's stuff in your letters page. I mean, I really like all the rest that goes into Cerebus, but his stuff is really great. Could you tell me if he has a fan club and if so, how I join it?

Hope to see you in Edmonton in July (is Mike coming with you?)

Rob McCulloch
136 Galloway Drive,
Sherwood Park, Alberta
T8A 2N2

PS: Don't tell my brother Derek I'm writing this.

PSS: I like adding extra little bits like this after the rest of the letter.

PPPS: I can't think of anything else to say.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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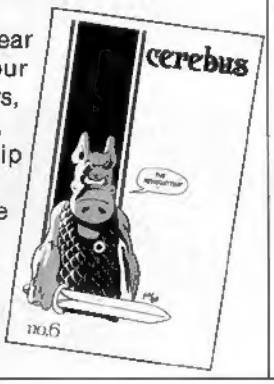

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